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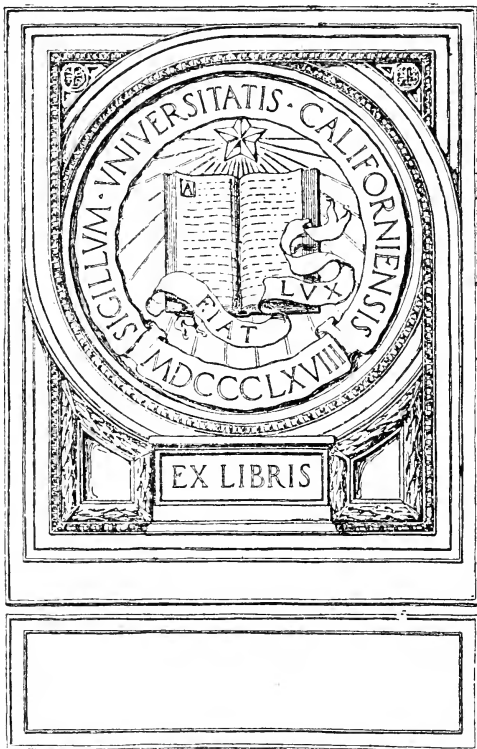
POEMS

BY

WILLIAM FORCE STEAD



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OXFORD

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VERD ANTIQUE

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

“It is in the soul that things happen”

SCENE: *An upper chamber in the Palace of the King of Babylon. Dusk on a hot summer's evening. The voice of one singing far off beyond the palace-gardens is heard vaguely from time to time. The King is sitting by an open window.*

The King of Babylon

SINCE I am Babylon, I am the world.
The windy heavens and the rainy skies
Attend the earth in humble servitude.
And I am Babylon, I am the world:
The heavens and their powers attend on me.

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

The Voice of One Crying in the Night

*Babylon, the glory of the Kingdoms,
And the Chaldee's excellency,
Is become as Sodom and Gomorrah,
Whom God overthrew by the Sea.*

The King

Who is that fellow crying by the river?
I think I heard him lift his voice in praise
Of Babylon: some minstrelle seeking hire:
I need him not to tell me who I am,
For I am Baladan of Babylon.
The splendours of my sceptre, throne, and crown,
And all the awe that fills my royal halls,
The pomp that heralds me, the shout that follows,
Are flying shadows and reflections only
From the wide dazzlings of myself, the King.
This I conceive: and yet, we kings have labour
To apprehend ourselves imperially,
And see the blaze and lightnings of our person;
The thought of their own sovereignty amazes

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

The princelings even, and the lesser kings :
But I am Baladan of Babylon.

The Voice in the Night

*Never again inhabited,
 Babylon, O Babylon!
Even the wandering Arabian
 From thy weary waste is gone.
Neither shall the shepherd tend his fold there,
 Nor any green herb be grown:
It cometh in the night-time suddenly,
 And Babylon is overthrown.*

The King

Pale from the east, the stars arise, and climb,
And then grow bright, beholding Babylon ;
They would delay, but may not ; so they pass,
And fade and fall, bereft of Babylon.
Quick from the Midian line the sun comes up,
For he expects to see my palaces ;
And the moon lingers, even on the wane. . . .

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

Mine ancient dynasty, as yon great river,
Euphrates, with his fountains in far hills,
Arose in the blue morning of the years ;
And as yon river flows on into time,
Unalterable in majesty, my line
Survives in domination down the years.
I know, but am concerned not, that some peoples,
At the pale limits of the world, abide
As yet beyond the circle of my sway,
The miserable sons of meagre soil
That needs much tillage ere the yield be good.
I only wait until they ripen more,
And fatten toward my final harvesting :
When I am ready, I will reap them in.
For it is written in the stars, and read
Of all my wise men and astrologers,
That I, and my great line of Babylon,
Shall rule the world, and only find a bound
Where the horizon's bounds are set, an end
When the world ends : so shall all other lands,
All languages, all peoples, and all tongues,

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

Become a fable told of olden times,
Deemed of our sons a thing incredulous.

The Voice in the Night

*Woeful are thy desolate palaces,
Where doleful creatures lie,
And wild beasts out of the islands
In thy fallen chambers cry.
Where now are the viol and the tabret?—
But owls hoot in moonlight,
And over the ruins of Babylon
The satyrs dance by night.*

The King

That voice, that seems to hum my kingdom's glory,
Fails in the vast immensity of night,
As fails all earthly praise of him who hears
The ceaseless acclamation of the stars.
What needs there more?—the apple of the world,
Grown ripe and juicy, rolls into my lap,
And all the gods of Babylon, well pleased

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

With blood of bulls and fume of fragrant things,
Even while I take mine ease, attend on me :
The figs do mellow, the olive, and the vine,
And in the plains climb the big sycamores ;
My camels and my laden dromodaries
Move in from eastward bearing odorous gums,
And the Zidonians hew me cedar beams,
Even tall cedars out of Lebanon ;
Euphrates floats his treasured freightage down,
And all great Babylon is filled with spoil.
Wherefore, upon the summit of the world,
The utmost apex of this thronèd realm,
I stand, as stands the driving charioteer,
And steer my course right onward toward the stars.
Mean-fated men my horses trample under,
And my wine-bins have drained the blood of
 mothers,
And smoothly my wheels run upon the necks
Of babes and sucklings,—while I hold my way,
Serene, supreme, secure in destiny,
Because the gods perceive mine excellence,

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON

And entertain for mine imperial Person
Peculiar favours. . . . I am Babylon :
Exceeding precious in the High One's eyes.

The Voice in the Night

*Babylon is fallen, fallen,
And never shall be known again !
Drunken with the blood of my Belovèd,
And trampling on the sons of men.
God is awake and aware of thee,
And sharply shines His sword,
Where over the earth spring suddenly
The hidden hosts of the Lord ;
Armies of right and of righteousness,
Huge hosts, unseen, unknown :
And thy pomp, and thy revellings, and glory,
Where the wind goes, they are gone.*

SWEET WILD APRIL

O SWEET wild April
Came over the hills,
He skipt with the winds
And he tript with the rills;
His raiment was all
Of the daffodils.

Sing hi,
Sing bey,
Sing ho!

O sweet wild April
Came down the lea,
Dancing along
With his sisters three:
Margaret, and Mary,
And tall Lily.

Sing hi,

SWEET WILD APRIL

Sing hey,

Sing ho!

O sweet wild April,

On oaten quill

Came piping in moonlight

By hollow and hill,

In starlight at midnight,

By dingle and rill.

Sing hi,

Sing hey,

Sing ho!

Where sweet wild April

His melody played,

Trooped cowslip, and primrose,

And iris, the maid,

And silver narcissus,

A star in the shade.

Sing hi,

Sing hey,

Sing ho!

SWEET WILD APRIL

Yet sweet wild April,
The blithe, the brave,
Fell asleep in the fields
By a windless wave,
And Jack-in-the-Pulpit
Preached over his grave.

Sing hi,

Sing hey,

Sing ho!

O sweet wild April,
Farewell to thee!
And a deep sweet sleep
To thy sisters three,—
Margaret, and Mary,
And tall Lily.

Sing hi,

Sing hey,

Sing ho!

VIOLETS IN LATE NOVEMBER

To Cicely Trafford, Aged Eleven

WHO would expect to see
Violets in late November?
As well might the apple tree
Blossom in dull December.

Things of this nature sound
Really beyond all reason ;
For who on the earth has found
Spring in the winter season?

Yet violets come to me,
Even in wintry weather ;
You say, But how can it be?—
Well, let us reason together :

VIOLETS IN LATE NOVEMBER

Cicely's gentle hand

Sent them ; and she is very
Friendly in Fairy-Land,
Lovèd of every fairy ;

She is my dearest friend,

Happy am I to befriend her ;
Fairies on her attend,
Wonderful gifts they send her ;

Therefore I think you see,

When these things you remember,
How violets come to me,
Even in late November.

THE MILLER OF HELL

A Gargoyle

I AM the Miller of Hell :
My big sails flap and swell,
With a grinding sound
Spun round and round,
By the sighs of the men that dwell
Damn'd here in Hell.

Mine is a busy mill,
The wheels are never still ;
They grind and grind,
And yet they find
More grain from the fields ye till
On the fool-sown hill.

Time's jaws are my mill-stones,
They grind till the old mill drones :

THE MILLER OF HELL

With the ripe red sin,
I sprinkle in
A pinch of a miser's bones,
And a jester's groans.

My lamps are eyes of the blind,
My beams and walls are lined
With barren schemes
And maniac dreams:
And I grin as I grind and grind
All human kind.

NIGHT-PIECE IN WINTER

Sunset

NOW the day declines,
And the rooks in lines and lines
Fly home to their windy realms
In the bald old oak and the elms.
Behold them, afar in the west,
They call and call ;
Pilgrims and heralds of rest
When the shadows fall. . . .
Ah, didst thou hear it?—the Wind
Whispering, “Ah, ah!”

Twilight

With crumbling coals a-smoulder
And cinders grey,
Low burns the hearth of day ;
Burns on, while day grown older
Wears away.

NIGHT-PIECE IN WINTER

An east wind icily whistles
And blows the coals aflame :
Ah, didst thou hear the thistles
When the wind came?—
The willows and sedges
And dead leaves caught in the hedges?
Ah, didst thou hear it?—the Wind
Wailing, “Ah, ah!”

Curfew

The water-rat delves and burrows
Into the ground ;
With a clicking sound
The halting sluices freeze ;
And man comes home from the furrows
And the sodden leas.
He bolts his doors
And draws his casement tight,
The chimney roars
And the ingle’s warm and bright.
Man takes his ease,

NIGHT-PIECE IN WINTER

And a babe plays round his knees :

While out in the night

The streams freeze. . . .

O man, didst thou hear it?—the Wind

Moaning, “Ah, ah!”

Midnight

Under the rending skies

And the groaning boughs,

Dreaming all night he lies

In his frail house :

Out in the dark

Kine low, dogs bark,

And the giant winds with a shout

Go trampling and treading about.

Man lies secure, he deems,

And troubles not to rouse,

Dreaming deluding dreams

In his frail house ;

While the winds carouse,

And round

NIGHT-PIECE IN WINTER

And round,

And nearer,

Nearer,

Sweep the Eumenides

And the roaring Destinies. . . .

O, if he knew thee, Wind,

Hallooing, "Woe, Woe!"

OUR LADY OF WISTFULNESS

AT twilight in the starlight, Wistful One,
I heard thy piping,—saw thee in the cool
Of evening, by a blue and placid pool
Of pallid-coloured water, whereupon
Some early stars were lying;
Behind thee, olive and tall cypress trees
O'erlaid the rosy end of day's down-dying;
While in low tones and plaining minor keys
Thou madest thine illusive melodies,
And alway calledst, "Hither, O come hither."
I followed, sighing, "Whither,
O whither wilt thou lead me, Wistful One?"

Unwearied seeker after Paradise,
O Pilgrim with all visions in thine eyes,
Already art thou gone?
I hear thee, yet do hardly see;

OUR LADY OF WISTFULNESS

Stay yet a while, wilt thou not wait for me,
O Wistful One?

Thou rovest now some heavy-wooded steep
On yonder darkling Apennines :
The shepherds, when thou comest, leave their sheep,
And thou disturbest the deep-dreaming pines :
Sea-wearied mariners, no sooner home,
Than hearing thee, lie wakeful half a night,
Then kiss their brides, and quickly in moonlight
Unfurl their sails, and on again they roam.

O thou that fallest with soft-falling rains,
Thou sigh that follow'st the departing sun,
How many faces to their window-panes
Thou drawest, Wistful One :
Thou callest up light-sleeping Princesses,
O midnight mover among palace trees
And wakener of birds in coverts green ;
And weaving maidens in their tower room,
Turn, when they hear thee, leave the hummingloom,
And from their casements, lost in wonder, lean.

OUR LADY OF WISTFULNESS

Thou worshipper of clouds in distant skies,
I see thee, when the moon begins to dawn,
Down the long sweep of some wide stately lawn,
With arms uplift and hope-entranced eyes :
Or where the road, far-travelling, vanishes
In curving under low-embowered trees,
One moment, and no more,
Thy fingers beckon, and thine eyes implore.

Unhappy here, thou wouldst be journeying far
Over the blue verge of the watery plain,
Beyond the sun's, beyond the moon's domain :
O alien, from the land where angels are,
Here hast thou strayed, and lost thy way, and fain
Wouldst find thine own fair fields again.
Ever thou roamest by the winding streams,
Between the hills to far leaf-hidden springs,
Roaming and seeking, while thy sad heart sings
Of times that are not the long-treasured themes ;
We hear thee when the faint moon gleams :
And lo, all lovelier things,

OUR LADY OF WISTFULNESS

Lo, all our deep divine imaginings,
Are wakings from thy songs, thy songs and dreams.
When on the midnight wind sing spirit-choirs
Thy voice the Poet inspires,
In chiming words, keyed low, blent tones of Fancy's
wreathing:

'Tis by thy breathing
The violin moans her infinite desires:
Cathedrals, where tall pillars rise and rise,
Are builded of thy longing for lost Paradise.

I saw thy maidens round thee, circle-wise,
Even in a place apart, an hallow'd hill,
At twilight, when the air is blue and still;
Their oval faces lifted in surmise
Were silver-lighten'd out of starry skies,
And there was star-light in their wakeful eyes.
With finely-taper'd fingers,
They woke the hidden note that lingers
Deep in the lute's heart and mute cithern strings,
The song of wishèd, dim-discernèd things,

OUR LADY OF WISTFULNESS

That always on the listless strings
Lingers, and only waits and stays
Till it may sail on villanelle and spiral virelays.

They gave the lorn note wings,
What time they touched the trembling strings,
Singing of Avalon the haunted isle,
Far over-sea, so long a while
Sought on horizons ever vanishing.
I heard them sing
Their passion-yearning, wild and sweet,
Until, where dusk and fair dreams meet,
The far sea-island floated near, and lo
The opal gates, the frail tall towers aglow
In gems of emerald and warm, ruby hues,
Soft-lighted, under evening's deep'ning blues.
So near, and yet I could but know,
I could but hear, mid their heart-piercing strain,
That all the sweet was only born of pain,
Seeing that no man shall that isle attain :

OUR LADY OF WISTFULNESS

Dream, dream; aye, all a dream, and are not
dreams but vain?

Yet out of dusty cities, parching lands,
I saw men lifting up imploring hands,
For on them, too, the gracious vision shone;
And they were movèd, and ill-satisfied,
The while they heard thee, and their hearts out-
cried,
“O thither, bring us thither, Wistful One.”

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

I

O SPIRIT of the Pure at Heart,
O thou of even-tempered mind,
Abiding in these glades apart,
Far from mankind,—
Thee would I worship and thee would I follow,
Whithersoever thy bidding may lead,
To lone bleak mountain, or shadowed hollow,
The brooding wood, or the sun-lit mead.
For the earth-ways are sweet,
They are goodly to know;
The noon on the wheat,
Or the moon on the snow:
They are all of them healing as herbs of the plain,
As rain after drought, as sun after rain;
They are all of them jets of the Fountain of Youth,
And the clear cool streams of Truth.

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

II

Lift up your eyes,
 O faint cuckoo-flower,
 That wilts in the heat of the noon :
O daisy that dies
 At the dew-fall hour,
 And never hast looked on the moon :

Lift up your eyes
To the flowering skies ;
 As the stars are, so are ye :
In your lives ye are one
With the moon, with the sun,
 And the winds that walk on the sea ;
The strong sun lives and moves in your veins,
And the fair moon woos you with moon-lit rains :
 Rejoice, O ye of high birth,
 Ye children of air and earth.

III

O Spirit of the Pure at Heart
Abiding in these glades apart,

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

Would, ah, would I were
As the oak-tree or the fir,
Deep of root and strongly growing,
Firm, tho' Baltic winds are blowing;
Yea, or the meanest bird that sings,
Or the humblest flower that springs:
But I am Life grown spiritless,
And I am Strength in weariness,
Worn in a quest I shall not win;
And I am Light in sore distress,
Grown dim with sin.

IV

O that I were as a thistledown,
As a thistledown on an Ayrshire lea;
O that I were as a thistledown,
Out of the pod and free;
For I would sail till the sun went down,
Over the gorse and the heather brown,
Far, O far, from the hated town,
And straight away to the sea!

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

O that I were as a thistledown,
 As a thistledown on an Ayrshire lea,
For I would sail till the sun went down,
 And the moon made light in the tree:
Yea, that I were as a thistledown,
Whirling away over heather brown,
For I would sail till the moon went down,
 Down in the midnight sea:
Sail, O sail, till the late stars drown,
 Down in the drowning sea.

v

I would that I were as the ivy-vine,
 As the darkest ivy climbing here,
Whose branches higher and higher twine,
 Year by year,
 To the sunlight clear,
 Seeking ever the upward sphere:
For the dawning rains and the twilight dew
Would wash my being through and through;
And deep to my heart I would draw the blue

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

Of the clear, unclouded noon ;
And sweet to feel when the year was new
And the wood-songs waking soon,
The breaking bud slip free of its hood
And tenderly finger the rugged wood,
Till it clasped the bark in its life's desire,
To win a year's growth higher.

VI

I would that I were as the ivy-root,
Down in the mould and the dark and the cold,
Yet ever feeding the anxious shoot
As it climbs in the realms of gold.
For I should know how it fared above,
Up in the tree-top, facing the sun,
And spreading a shelter to shield the dove,
And the thrushes every one :
And I should know when the day was done
And a great wind rushed from the sunken sun,
How the boughs and the clinging vines were
swayed

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

In the moving music the great wind made.
And at night
When the light
Of the starry throng
Had pierced to the midmost heart of the vine,
Below,
I should know,
All the whole night long,
The leaves in the dew and the pale star-shine:
Yea, I should know all the lights that move,
The song of the thrush, and the call of the dove;
But only live for the vine above,
And feed it full of my love.

VII

Sweet is the life of the flower that springs of the
calm of night;
Born for a single day, and as the morning, bright;
Quietly open its petals, and peace lies at their heart:
And the sun falls; and the wind blows; and the
petals are blown apart.

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

Good, ah, good, is the life of the clustered boles
in the wood;

Good the sunrise, good the dewfall; good, ex-
ceeding good:

And the sun and the dewfall build the branches
large and firm and sound:

Build them awhile, and leave them awhile; and
yield them again to the ground.

Light of heart is the life of the water that finds its
way

Out of the caverns of earth to the grace and joy of
day;

Lightly it leaps the crag, and lightly follows its
quest,

Out of the mountain, into the valley, and down to
the deep sea's rest. :

VIII

The Woodland Spirit spake to me:

O thou of earth and sun and rain,

A SONG IN BOLDERWOOD

High beings, without stain ;
These are the strong sons of eternity,
And thou of these art moulded, but on thee
Is grown the fungus of mortality,
And there is death in thee :
Go back, go down, go home,
To thy clean sweet home in the loam,
 Go down, go home ;
Out of the earth thou didst ascend,
And the loam is thine only home at the end :
To thy clean sweet home in the loam
 Go down, go home.

A DEATH IN THE HOUSE

THERE is much tiptoe moving to and fro
In darkened chambers where the blinds are
tight,

And voices whisper in the ghostly light,
And fear steals trembling in a shroud of woe,
Because an old man from his home must go:
For him the home is fading out of sight,
He will be gone before the fall of night,
So all is closed and hushed, the light made low.
Nay, but fling back the blinds, let the sun shine!

So may this voyager lift his eyes and hail
The blue alluring wild unending west;
For neither Jason cleaving the lone brine
Toward Colchis, nor Columbus under sail,
Adventured on so high, so bold a quest.

PILGRIMAGE

Καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἄθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς μεγάλη.

PLATO, *Phaedo*, p. 114.

I

MY way lay east and north,
The road seemed hard to me ;
From Eden driven forth,
I toiled toward Calvary.

The night hung deep around,
There was no moon or star ;
A short way some have found,
I found the journey far.

Yet there at last I came,
And saw Christ on the tree :
His wounds were rosy flame,
And His eyes were kind to me.

PILGRIMAGE

II

I thought to rest me there,
And yet my hope was vain ;
Another night I dare,
And journey on again.

Yea, I must onward still,
So far the goal I seek ;
And when I climb the hill,
Behold, a mountain peak :

But in the night, afar
Two beacons lighten me :
Ahead, the Morning Star,
Behind me, Calvary.

DOWN IN THE DEEP, DEEP SEA

MANY a garden and blossom rare
There needs must be,
And many a long white winding stair,
Leading away to those gardens fair,
Down,
Down,
Down in the deep, deep sea.

Quiet and peaceful those gardens are,—
They needs must be,—
Where the mermaid roaming may see afar
Through darkling waters the evening star,
Down,
Down,
Down in the deep, deep sea.

DOWN IN THE DEEP, DEEP SEA

The mermen call with their bugle-shells,—

It needs must be,—

The sea-nymphs answer on fond faint bells:

How the music wavers and dies and swells,

Down,

Down,

Down in the deep, deep sea.

THE HAUNTED HAMLET

IT lies amid enfolding hills that keep
The old years in, far from the rumbling world.

At sunset when I walk the lane that leads
Down to that haunted hamlet, on the way
I hear the tread of long dead villagers,
The seed-time sowers of forgotten years,
And reapers reaping when a Tudor reigned;
The nameless labourers whom no stone recalls,
Of whom no tale is told; yet still their toil
Lives in the bosom of the brooding fields.

Around an open green and under limes
That sweep the thatch, are red-walled cottages,
With gables raised on beams irregular;
Here are their homes, they builded these red walls;
And now the windows are as eyes that gaze

THE HAUNTED HAMLET

Across the green to where the steeple shows
Over the elms that shade the village graves.

At twilight, wandering by, through leaded panes
I see the rosy housewives round their hearths,
And maidens spreading tables; yet I see
Other inhabitants in those old homes,
And gatherings from far years in the dim rooms:
The glees and woes of generations gone
Time out of mind from their familiar homes.

At evening, from a trimly furrowed field
Brown with the new-turned earth, I see strong men
Lead their large horses home; but after them
Come others, phantom plowmen, grey and worn,
Laden with years of labour: a mist falls,
The moon goes dim; yet I can see them there,
Laborious in the moonlight all night long.

DAYBREAK

At Midsummer

AT the dawn's emergence, early in the morning,—

O so cool!—

Early, at the palest and the frailest time of morning,
Heavy is the west, but the clouds look torn in
All the eastern heavens, and the stars seem forlorn in
The dim pool.

Stilly comes the morning, but all the stillness rings
With a shrilly music, chime of silver strings,
With a slender piping, with a quivered trilling,
myriad shooting wings,
Fugitive, ærial, instant whisperings.

DAYBREAK

Peaceful is the dawning, calm and very kind,
Hopeful, with the radiant day pressing close
behind:

Suddenly and mournfully a solitary wind
Turns to the pine-tops, pleads and beseeches,
Shivers in the elm trees, moans among the
beeches,—

Then roams away and vanishes,—a momentary
wind,

Unhappy as the wistful heart that seeks what no
men find.

THE WEIRD MINSTRELLE

(A Knight, having slain his Brother)

A LONE, alone, and ever alone,
Alone, an I live or die ;
Alone, while night like an iron mask
Shuts down on the brow of the sky.

Alone, alone, and ever alone
In a mould'ring tower I dwell ;
But I wad laugh in the eyes o' Fear
An I heard not the Weird Minstrelle.

O weary, weary, the dead of night,
When the sullen thunder sounds,
Like a bell that booms in the glooms of hell,
Far over the sunken grounds.

THE WEIRD MINSTRELLE

And wild the sight of the fens by night
When the livid lightning flies,
Like a flaming sword that opens a wound,
A blood-red wound in the skies.

And drear the sight of the flickering light
That lurks in the dungeon dell :
But O, most weary, and wild, and drear,
The sound of the Weird Minstrelle.

Yet none have seen him abroad, with night
Before, and the storm behind,
For he dwells in the fog of the sodden bog,
And he walks in the way of the wind.

O Weird Minstrelle o' the Limbo Lake!
That sings when an eerie blast
Tears open the clouds, and the waning moon
Stares into my heart aghast :

O Weird Minstrelle o' the Limbo Lake,
'Tis a dismal dirge to sing,

THE WEIRD MINSTRELLE

In the mirk midnight, in the mirk midnight,
When the glimmering moorlands ring.

Aye, weary the sight of the fens by night
When the luminous lightning flies,
When thunders rattle the kirkyard bones
And death-lights open their eyes :

But O, I wad dance with the leaping lights,
An I heard not the Weird Minstrelle!—
For he sounds one chord, and he drones one
word,
The curse of a brother in hell.

WORSHIP OF HIS LADY

LORD, all these painted windows are ablaze
With symbols, holy folk, and angels white ;
Here, shepherds and their star that streaks the
night,
There, bright-wing'd cherubs offering silent praise.
And, Lord, thy golden-throated organ plays,
Now like sonorous waters when they smite
Deep-sounding sea-cliffs; now as soft and light
As wild winds piping down the woodland ways.
Lord, all these things are very good, perde,
But she who kneels there, lady morning-faced,
So worthy is, she leads me more to Thee
Than aught that cunning art herein has placed;
She is Thy daughter, and so pure that she
Knows not above all ladies she is graced.

SERVICE TO HIS LADY

“Mon âme a son secret, ma vie a son mystère.”

FÉLIX ARVERS.

LADY, thy faithful pensioner I would be,
And bring a lifelong service to thy praise,
Through weary nights and heavy-hearted days
Taking no thought save how to honour thee.
It is enough if you remember me
And those old times together; if the rays
Of setting sun, or star in twilight haze
Light up sometime an ancient memory.
Enough? Ah no, no, not enough!—And yet—
However far apart our ways may lie,
Though we should meet no more, and you forget
Me and old times together utterly—
For all the holy hours once granted me,
Lady, thy faithful pensioner I shall be.

VESPERAL

“Bring him into the light and the land of the living.”

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE.

PRAY for the dead at fall of night ;
When the sun is fled,
And the world is given to peaceful things,
O, pray for the dead.

I think that thro' the wearing day
They keep afar,
But venture near when night revives
In star on star.

Have ye not seen how the wind falls,
By some strange law,
When night returns, and the wood stands
In solemn awe?

VESPERAL

The dead men may be near the while,
Pleading for you
To help them, and your prayers may fall
On them like dew.

We cannot know how for the dead
Our prayers avail ;
Yet over them the words may sing
Like a nightingale.

Our prayers may rise on their dim way
As stars, and shed
Rays that do lead to lands of light
The pilgrim dead.

LADY SUN-DOWN

LADY Sun-Down
Even more still is
Than the moon-
 Enchanted lilies,
Entertaining
 Such dim fancies
As inhabit
 Duskier pansies.

For her solace
 Sorrow's daughter,
To the tune
 Of falling water,
Sings a burden,
 Chanting lowly,
Of her goddess
 Melancholy.

LADY SUN-DOWN

Where the drifting
 Dreams are legion,
Down by Sorrow's
 Border region,
She hath builded
 Her a tower :
Round it bloometh
 The moon-flower.

All that weary
 Hearts remember
Of vain hopes
 And love's dead ember,
All the mournful
 Hours of weeping,
Lady Sun-Down
 Hath in keeping.

Lady Sun-Down
 In forbidden
Holy chambers
 Hath them hidden ;

LADY SUN-DOWN

Orphan loves
And unbefriended;
All unhappy
Things now ended.

Lady Sun-Down,
Open never
This, my offering,
Sealed for ever;
Ask me not
What it encloses;
On it only
Strew dead roses.

SOLITUDE IN SPRING

I USED to tell her of the flowers in spring,
All that she loved, but saw not ; so I knew
That every lane where the wild violet grew,
The dale where daffodil went wayfaring,
And wells and rocks with young ferns upspringing,
Were lovely not alone for me ; a true
Gift of delight to share with her, I drew
From these, my haunts, my wayside communing.
But now, when spring returns, and she is gone,
Now if I walk the newly-flowered ways,
What do I miss amid the fresh green sprays ?—
Since they are lovely for mine eyes alone,
The silence of a winter's night is grown
A greater loneliness in April days.

EPILOGUE

*ALL the days I've known with her,
Are laid away in lavender:*

*Not as other days, that go
Leaving nothing fair behind them;
She is hid in them, and so,
Fragrant still and sweet I find them:*

*Days than all days lovelier,
Laid away in lavender.*

*I had hoped, but hoped in vain,
Later springs might yet restore them;
Spring returns, and I again
Wait and watch and hunger for them:
Yet those days come not again,
Not again.*

*Who shall know how fair they were,
By their fading lavender?*



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